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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 004785

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PTER PREL TU IZ PKK

SUBJECT: TURKS OF TWO MINDS ABOUT TRILATERAL MEETING ON THE
PKK/KGK

REF: A. STATE 149796

TB. ANKARA 4658

Classified By: Acting DCM Timothy A. Betts for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) The Turkish media provided generally low-key, negative initial coverage of US-Turkey-Iraq meeting on the PKK/KGK that took place in Washington August 6 (ref a). Most papers reported that the USG and the ITG had rejected Turkey's demand for immediate action against the terrorist group's camps in Iraq. Subsequent statements and briefings in Washington and Ankara, by both USG and GOT spokesmen, appeared to temper the news reporting on the issue, with more positive stories appearing that noted the agreement to set up law enforcement working groups. Columnists, however, were a mixed bag, with irresponsible writers claiming that the USG was deliberately protecting the PKK/KGK as punishment for the failure of the Turkish parliament to approve US forces entering Iraq through Turkey in March 2003.

¶2. (C) The Turkish delegation chairman, MFA Security Affairs DG Hayati Guven, was upbeat in his assessment of the talks. He told polmilcouns August 8 that the meeting was "useful." He reported to his superiors that US continued to be committed to the elimination the PKK threat to Turkey in northern Iraq. Regarding his bilateral meetings, Guven said he found ideas he heard about possible new steps against the PKK in Europe to be "constructive," although these should not be to the exclusion of measures against the PKK in Iraq. He looked forward to hearing more about these initiatives once Washington was prepared to discuss them in detail. He also appreciated the US offer at the trilateral talks to draft a framework paper on next steps.

¶3. (C) Comment: Guven's positive assessment differed from that of the prime minister who was less positive when he saw the charge the same day (ref b). At that meeting, he thought the tardy Iraqi arrival for the talks demonstrated the ITG's lack of commitment on the issue, and complained that the meeting produced no results. Clearly, those working the issue like Guven have a far better appreciation for the difficulties involved than their superiors or the public. But even Guven repeatedly returned to the need to take action in Iraq. This reflects the fact that while Turks are of two minds about the meeting, they all share the same frustration that PKK attacks are continuing and the terrorists' leadership remains beyond Ankara's reach in Iraq. End comment.

MCELDOWNEY